

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today opened the first session of the 110th Congress by voting for a sweeping ethics reform package that will help clean up Washington and restore public trust in the political system. The Honest Leadership and Open Government bill passed in the House with the strong support of Hinchey and his fellow Democrats.

"One of the main reasons Democrats took control of Congress today is because the American people are sick and tired of corruption in Washington and a political system that is more about the interests of corporations and lobbyists rather than the interests of the American people," Hinchey said. "Before we move forward with any of the other important pieces of legislation that we intend to pass in the coming weeks, we must clean the slate and implement rules that will help shield this great institution from corporate interests. The provisions we passed in the House tonight will significantly clean up Congress and help government regain the trust of the American people."

The ethics reform package is comprehensive and will address the following issues:

- **Bans Gifts from Lobbyists:** Bans gifts, including meals and tickets, from lobbyists and the organizations that employ them, and requires that tickets to sporting and other events given to Members and staff by non-lobbyists are valued at market price.
- **Bans Lobbyist Travel:** Bans lobbyists and the organizations that employ them from financing travel for Members or staff, except for one-day travel to visit a site, attend a forum, participate in a panel, or give a speech. The ethics committee would be required to develop guidelines for minimal lobbyist involvement for one-day/one-night travel. Travel provided by a university would not be affected by anything in the rules package.
- **Requires Certification and Pre-Approval for Travel Paid for By Outside Groups:** Requires the sponsors of all other permitted travel to certify that they have abided by all restrictions on lobbyist involvement. Requires Members and staff to obtain pre-approval from the ethics committee for travel to ensure trips are connected to official duties, the amount spent is limited to reasonable expenses, and the destination is related to the purpose of the trip. Requires the full disclosure of all travel within 15 days after the trip. Travel provisions take effect beginning on March 1.

- **Prohibits use of Company Planes:** Prohibits the use of official, personal or campaign funds to pay for the use of non-commercial, corporate jets. This provision does not apply to charter plane services or to airplanes owned by Members.
- **Ends the K Street Project:** Clarifies that no Member can take or withhold an official act, or influence, or offer or threaten to influence, the official act of another with the intent to influence on the basis of partisan political affiliation an employment decision or employment practice of any private entity
- **Mandates Ethics Training:** Require mandatory ethics training annually for all House employees.